

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 8

By Finney R.

A RESOLUTION to direct the Department of Education to conduct a study on school bus safety relative to the use of safety restraints for school children.

WHEREAS, the safety of the children of Tennessee is of the utmost concern to every member of this General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of school children in Tennessee travel to and from school every day on school buses; and

WHEREAS, the recent tragedy in Huntsville, Alabama, where a school bus full of students crashed, killing four students, has once again brought attention to the debate on the use of safety restraints on school buses; and

WHEREAS, the members of this body should appropriately request guidance and assistance from the Department of Education and other appropriate state agencies as they consider this matter; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that the Department of Education, in conjunction with the Department of Safety and other agencies as requested, is hereby directed to conduct a comprehensive study on the issue of school bus safety, specifically to determine whether school buses should be fitted with safety restraints, preferably, lap belts with shoulder harnesses.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the department shall make a written report of its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly no later than December 31, 2007.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that such written report shall provide an explanation of why such restraints are inappropriate if the findings within such report conclude that school buses should not be fitted with safety restraints.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the findings within such report conclude that school buses should be fitted with safety restraints, the report shall (1) provide an estimate of the cost of retrofitting a school bus and the added cost of this feature on the purchase of a new school bus, (2) a statement whether the state will reimburse a local education agency, in total or part, for the cost of retrofitting school buses with safety restraints, (3) a realistic timetable under which such safety items may be installed, and (4) a statewide policy for required use of such items, pursuant to enactment of any necessary statutory change by the general assembly.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an enrolled copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Commissioner of the Department of Education.